

# ARCHAEOLOGY

Interest in the archaeology and history of the site began in the mid 18th century when it was re-discovered by the famous Manchester antiquarian, Thomas Percival, in 1751. Since then a number of important excavations and surveys have been conducted, including a series of modern investigations in the 1980s undertaken by GMAU and Oldham MBC to interpret, landscape and present the fortlet site.



In 1958, the importance of Castleshaw as a national heritage asset was recognised in its designation as a Scheduled Monument. Today, the site is a key educational resource; the nearby Castleshaw Centre regularly organising educational visits and activities. It is also a popular recreation area for local people and visitors who come to explore the remains and enjoy the natural landscape and stunning views out across the reservoir and surrounding uplands.

The current owners, United Utilities, have worked closely with English Heritage to ensure the good condition and upkeep of the monument, but there are still factors which affect the preservation and public enjoyment of the site. Like many of the country's upland heritage assets, its exposed location makes it prone to natural erosion and vulnerable to potential anti-social problems like vandalism and litter. However there are also other issues which need to be addressed including the hazards posed by the exposed trenches and spoil heaps from previous excavations, control of vegetation, footpath erosion, visitor access (particularly for the disabled), and site displays and interpretation.

# WE NEED YOU!

In order to address these risks and issues, and ensure the future of the forts, the **Castleshaw Working Party** (CWP) has been set up to look at the long term management of the site. It comprises individuals from a number of different fields and institutions who are committed to securing the future of this nationally significant monument. As the first part of this process a Conservation Management Plan has been commissioned to help us understand just what it is that makes the Castleshaw forts and the surrounding valley so special. This is where we need your help...

## WHAT DOES CASTLESHAW MEAN TO YOU?

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET INVOLVED?

**The Friends of Castleshaw Roman Forts** (FCRF) is a group set up to help look after the site and get people involved in the various initiatives and events which have come out of the Conservation Management Plan. If you would like to join the Friends then please email: [curator@saddleworthmuseum.net](mailto:curator@saddleworthmuseum.net) or write to:

**Friend of Castleshaw Roman Forts**  
c/o The Curator  
Saddleworth Museum  
Uppermill  
Oldham, OL3 6HS



Please note Castleshaw is a Scheduled Monument and protected by law, any damage caused to the site is a criminal offence.

Roman soldier courtesy Graham Sumner, all other images courtesy of GMAU.

# CASTLESHAW ROMAN FORT

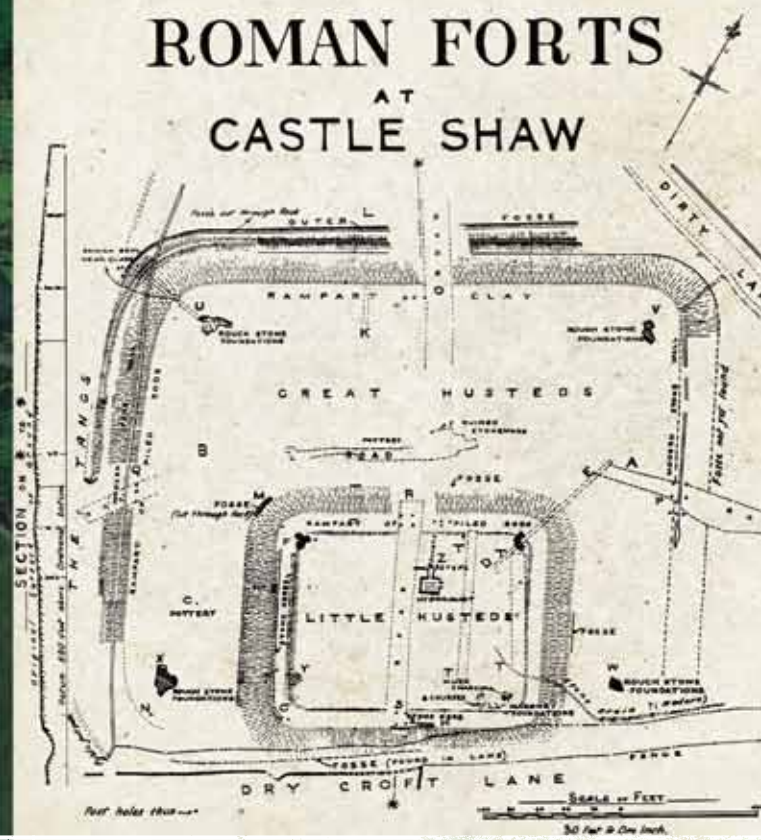
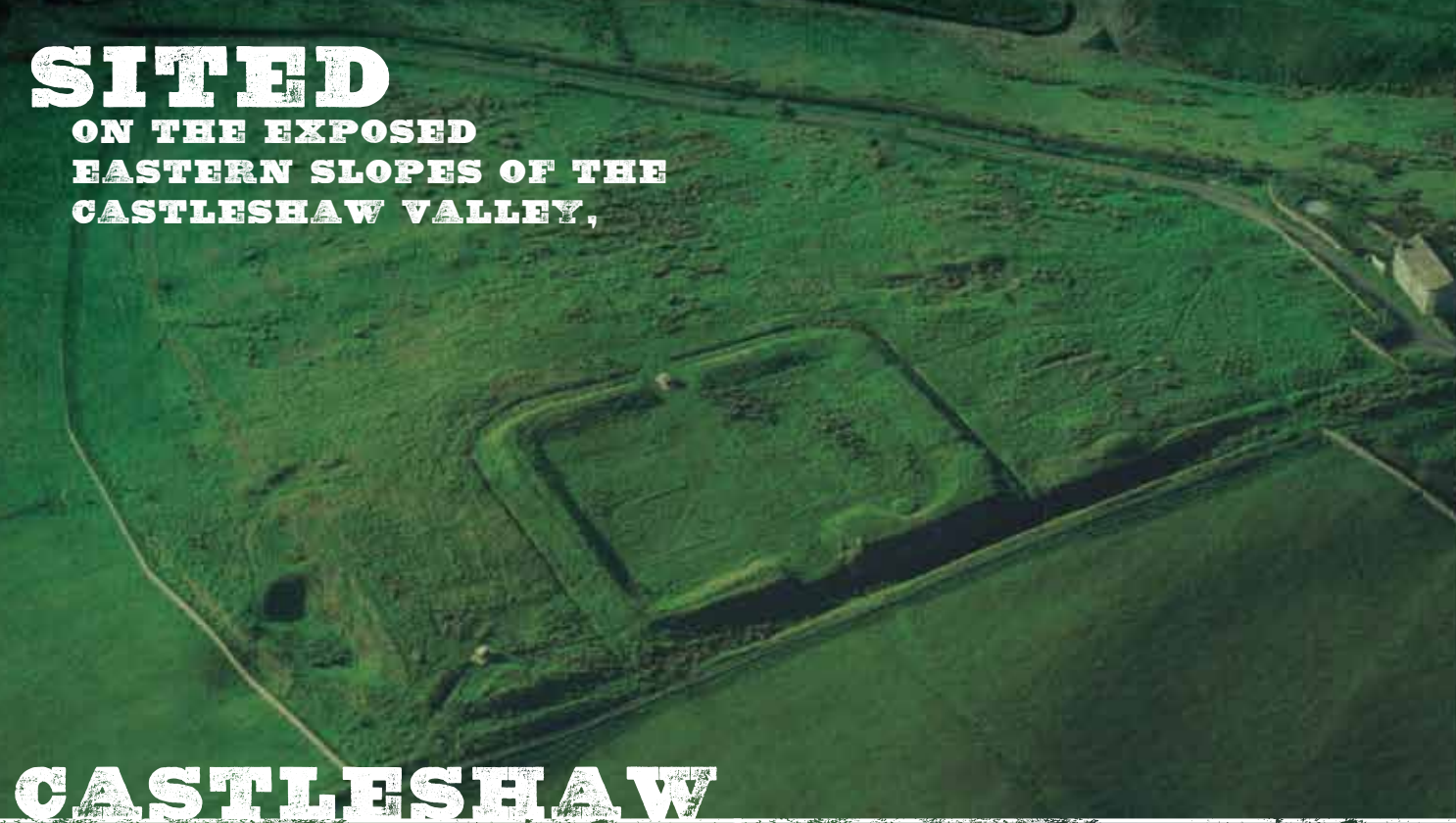


Securing  
**YOUR**  
Heritage

# SITED

ON THE EXPOSED  
EASTERN SLOPES OF THE  
CASTLESHAW VALLEY,

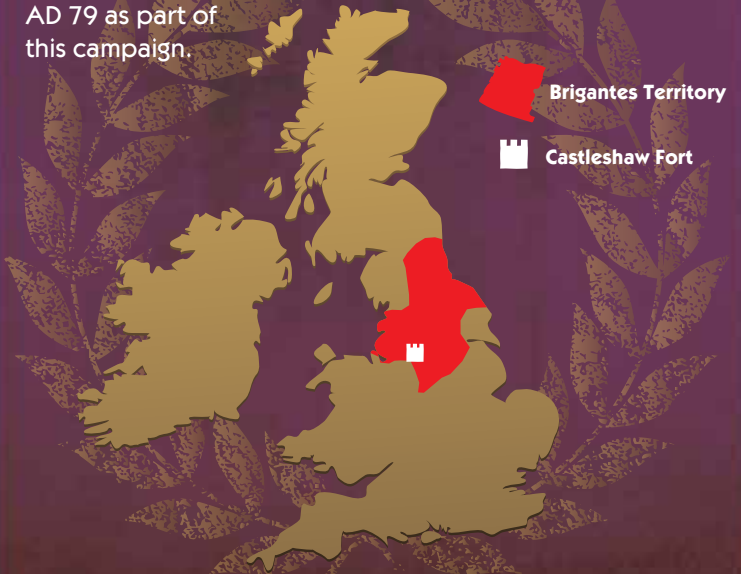
# CASTLESHAW



Roman fort stands as testimony to the force and governance of the Imperial army. However, Castleshaw is proving to be so much more than another dot on a military campaign map. Through years of detailed archaeological excavation and research we are now beginning to understand how the fort, and later fortlet, formed part of an integrated landscape of conquest. On a more domestic level, discoveries are also being made about the day-to-day organisation and administration of the site, giving us a rare glimpse of what life might have been like for an ordinary auxiliary soldier posted to this bleak outpost on the edge of the empire.

The site lies on the course of the Roman military road from Chester to York; a day's march from the main fort at Manchester which controlled the western end of the important trans-Pennine pass. In AD 71, after ten years of relative peace in Britain, the Emperor Vespasian launched a new offensive to subjugate those native tribes which still held out against Roman rule.

The Northern Campaign, led by the governor **Agricola**, was intended to bring about the defeat of the **Brigantes**, a powerful tribe who held all the land between the Humber and the Tyne. The first fort at Castleshaw was built around AD 79 as part of this campaign.



It was initially a standard auxiliary fort covering 1.2 hectares and enclosed by a turf rampart and ditch. However, this was occupied for a relatively short period of time and fell out of use some time around AD 90. It was replaced a few years later (c.AD 105) by a much smaller fortlet, the outline of which is clearly visible on the site today. This would have housed only around 80 men, and was probably served by a small civilian community (a vicus) located just outside the southern ramparts. The fortlet remained in use until the AD 120s when it was finally abandoned.

*“he gave the enemy no peace from the devastation of sudden raids: conversely by his clemency, after he had overawed them sufficiently, he paraded before them the attractions of peace.”*

*Tacitus writing about Agricola (on the conquest of the Brigantes)*